



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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19 July 2004

RUS42797.E

Russia: Discrimination against the Buriat (Buryat) people of the Republic of Buryatia and whether Potapov is still the president of this region; if so, information on his relations with political opponents (July 2004)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Information on discrimination against the Buryat people could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

However, one report of 2004 indicated that since the lifting of Soviet control, the Buryat people can now freely practice their traditional religions that are based on Tibetan Buddhism and Shamanism (*American Theatre* 1 May 2004).

In its June 2002 *Risk Assessment*, Minorities at Risk (MAR) noted that while they possess a strong and concentrated level of national identity, Buryat have made only moderate protests for autonomy. For the Buryat people, environmental degradation, widespread health problems, unemployment and poverty are the most serious obstacles impeding economic development (MAR June 2002).

Reports of mid-2004 refer to Leonid Potapov as the president of the Republic of Buryatia (Ria Oreanda 6 July 2004; *ibid.* 27 May 2004; Interfax News Agency 6 July 2004). However, information on his relations with political opponents could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

American Theatre. 1 May 2004. Vol. 21, No. 5. "Out of Buryatia." (Dialog)

Interfax News Agency. 6 July 2004. "Russian Buddhists Again Ask for Entry Visa for Dalai Lama." (Dialog)

Ria Oreanda. 6 July 2004. "30th Anniversary of BAM Construction to Be Celebrated in Russia on July 9." (Dialog)

_____. 27 May 2004. "Government of Buryatia, Siberian Coal Energy Company (Russia) Signed Agreement on Social, Economic Cooperation." (Dialog).

Minorities At Risk Project (MAR). June 2002. Amy Pate. "Buryat in Russia."
<<http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/data/rusburyt.htm>> [Accessed 12 July 2004]

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including : Amnesty International (AI), Dialog, Ecoi.net, Eurasianet, Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, *Journal of Eurasia Research*, Minorities Electronic Resources, Organisation suisse d'aide aux réfugiés, *The Russia Journal Daily*, United States Department of State, Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO).

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